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THE EARLY MISSION CHURCHES CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AROCHUKWU: 1901-1906

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Introduction

The Aro people of Arochukwu enjoyed a wonderful hegemony among the Igbo and Ibibio people at the end of the nineteenth century. This was mainly as a result of the highly sophisticated and specialized skills exhibited by the Aro people in the management and the organization of the Long *Juju* oracle and slave trade. Olatunbosun (1979, P.171) states that "The *Ibiniukpabi* otherwise known as the Long *Juju* of Arochukwu was the most famous oracle notes that "the Long *Juju* of Arochukwu was the famous of all oracles in Igboland. It was Ibo's (sic) greatest oracle whose shrine later became the court of appeal throughout the Igboland". Oji (2011, P.1) notes that the Long *Juju* was seen as the "final bus-stop" for various problems ranging from seeking of lost items to solving of mysterious problems and arbitrations. Thus, the Long *Juju* and the system wielded a great influence in all Igboland and beyond. However, this vantage position of the Aro people was seen as a threat by the colonial masters and white missionaries and this gave rise to the Aro expedition of 1901-1902 as well as subsequent efforts aimed at checking further development of the Aro kingdom. In fact, it took the British might, at the turn of the 20th century, to stop Aro imperial domination and economic control of the impenetrable Igbo interior, With the defeat and subjugation of Arochukwu by January 1902, the British occupied the hinterland, terminated the Aro's slave trading practice, and opened the country to foreign contacts, Ilogu (1994, P.75) asserts that;

The planting of Christianity in Iboland (sic) involved a good many other factors of human nature, historical facilities or hindrances... the historical situation of Iboland at the time of arrival of the missionaries was timely. The activities of the Aro people (the cross river Ibos who managed the Ibiniukpabi oracle) in harassing some villagers with their Abam mercenaries, the hunting

of slaves and the kidnapping of persons, had wearied the Ibo (sic) people to the point of their being ready to welcome something new.

From the foregoing therefore, could it be said that the coming of the mission churches and the British Government was an outright disruptive mission? Was the emergence of the early mission churches of no benefit to Aro kingdom and Igboland? This paper aims at clearing the cloud in this regard as well as presenting as vividly as possible the history and achievements of the early mission churches on the development of Arochukwu. The scope of this work will be centered on Arochukwu in south-east region of Nigeria and the arrival, activities and achievements of early mission churches in Arochukwu. For the purpose of clarity, the early mission churches refer to the two mission churches that arrived at the Aro scene on/or before the Aro-expedition of 1901/2. Namely, the Niger Delta Pastorate which later metamorphosed into the Anglican Church and the United free church of Scotland which later became church of Scotland and now known as the Presbyterian Church. The Roman Catholic Church (RCM) came to Arochukwu later in 1920 through the Aro people who lived at Arondizuogu, and who, from time to time came to Arochukwu to trade and visit their Aro relations. The next church to arrive at the Aro mission field after the Roman Catholic Church was the United Native African church (UNAC) in 1931. But the church could not survive in Aro soil and went into extinction in the 1940. Other churches arrived much later like the Assemblies of God church, the Lutheran church, the Methodist church, the Eternal order of Cherubim and Seraphim church, and the Church of Christ. The terms early Mission Church and Christianity shall be used inter changeably in this work.

Definition of Terms

Before delving fully into this work, it would be necessary to define the key terms used immensely in this research. These are contribution, mission church, Christianity and development.

Contribution: This paper agrees with Hornby (2009) that contribution implies an action or a service that helps to cause an increase to something.

Mission Churches: In the Light of this work, Mission Churches refer to those early Christian denominations brought by the white missionaries.

Brief History of Arochukwu Before the Early Mission Churches

Arochukwu is an ancient kingdom located in the South-East zone of Nigeria and is made up of Nineteen (19) villages, namely: Ugwuakuma, Agbagwu, Amarmaagwu, Ibom, Ujari, Amasu, Oror, Obinkita, Ugbo, Amoba, Amankwu, Ugwuavo, Asaga, Atani, Amuvi, Amaukwu, Arnangwu, Utughugwu and Isimkpu. Arochukwu occupies a boundary between Abia and Akwa-Ibom states and coordinates 5° 23N,55 E. Arochukwu has a land mass area total of 202 square (52km²) with a population well above (4,000,000) and the following languages Igbo, Ibibo, Ekoi, Ijaw, Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri and others are spoken by the indigenes.

Religious background

The ancient town of Arochukwu now in Abia state occupied a paramount position in the religious setting of Igboland and beyond in the 18th and 19th centuries. The presence and highly advanced operation of the Long *Juju Ibinukpabi* oracle of Arochukwu made it possible for the Aro people to control to a great extent the religious inclination of many Igbo and non-Igbo communities. Ijoma (2002, P. 47) posits in this regard that;

The Aro oracle Ibinukpabi, was also called to service. Because of the respect and prestige which the Aro enjoyed as the owners of the oracle: the Aro moved freely, since any harm to the Aro could incur the anger and wrath of the oracle.

The Aro oracle-Long *Juju Ibinukpabi* was consulted for the settlement of difficult disputes and in finding lost items as well as in handling mysterious cases by people from near and afar. In fact, every Aro man was as a priest of the oracle as they play the role of representatives to the oracle even in their various distant Aro settlements. Thus, the Aro people wielded powerful influence on the religious and geo-political setting of the time. They were able to frustrate earlier attempts by the United Free Church of Scotland (U.F.C.S); that is the Presbyterian Church to evangelize the town. For the Aro held the view that the introduction of Christianity would undermine the influence of the Long *Juju Ibinukpabi* of Arochukwu and destroy the lucrative slave trade connected with it.

Like other Igbo clans, the Aro people believed in the Supreme Being-*Chukwu* or *Chineke* which the *Ibinukpabi* is regarded as representing.

Prayers and sacrifices are offered directly to *Chukwu* and they hold strong beliefs to it. However, the Aro people have lesser deities like *Iyamavia* believed to be god of fertility and prosperity. Parinder (1961) asserts that an ultimate recipient of the sacrifices offered to the lesser spirits was *chukwu*. Prior to the twentieth century, people were taken to a dark chamber in the cave to appear before *chukwu* (God) for judgment and to the oracle shrine of *Ibinukpabi* for ritual processing during the slave period.

Social Background

The Aro people have high potentials in socialization. The make-up of the Aro kingdom speaks volume in this regard. Burns cited by Onwuchekwa. (2000, P. 16) point out that;

The Aro were not a military race, but owed their power to their relatively great intelligence as compared with the neighboring tribes; they seldom fought themselves, but dealt with their enemies by sending against them the warlike tribes under their influence, recompensing their mercenaries with the loot obtained from their vanquished foes.

The Aro kingdom composed of the three major kindred which are the Okennachi, Ibom Isii and Ezeagwu. These three kindreds are made up of the following villages:

The Okennachi: Utughugwu, Oror, Amankwu, Isimkpu, Amangwu, Asaga, Amuvi, Part of Atani (Atani Okennachi), Obinkita Okennachi (Nde-Agor Compound).

The Ibom Isii: Ugwuakuma, Agbagwu, Ugwuavo, Ibom Etiti (Ibom Village), Amasu, Amukwa, Oror Ibom Isii; and

The Ezeagwu: Amangwu, Obinkita, (the original Ama-Agwu except Nde-Agor), Atani Ezeagwu, Amoba, Ugwuavor, Ugbo.

It is necessary to state here that the three villages named, Amoba, Ugwuavor and Ugbo are referred to as *Umunna Okwaragwu* village. Onwuchekwa (2008), posits that, Oror village where the Arochukwu palace is situated, is made up of the Arochukwu kindred of Okennaachi, Ibom Isii and Ezeagwu with varying populations, although the Okennaachi is claimed to be the dominant population of Oror.

The Aro people are mainly farmers and traders. The network of the Long Juju Ibinukpabi oracle created the opportunity for Aro people to excel in itinerant trading activities along the coastal routes and Aro settlement. There is always close-knitted relationship among the Aro wherever they are found. An Aro man cannot think evil, defraud or do any harm to a fellow Aro man. Hence the saying in Aro palance; *Nwa Aro anaghi asi nwa Aro ibe ya na Ibinukpuabi ajugbala ya* meaning: An Aro man does not say to a fellow Aro man that Long Juju Ibinukpabi oracle asks of him. Prior to the arrival of Christianity in Arochukwu a number of taboos were observed. It was a taboo to have twins. In the event of women delivering twins, the babies were killed and mother ostracized. The husband of such an unfortunate woman would perform some ceremonial roles before being able to assume normal village social life. Adultery and prostitution are also regarded as taboo. Onwuchekwa (1993, p. 35) stresses that;

Prostitution or sexual intimacy between a married woman and another man was in Arochukwu history so objectionable to the living and the dead and is regarded as a heinous crime for which the death penalty could in ancient times be imposed on the erring woman.

Incest and murder are also seen as taboo and attracts being sold into slavery and death respectively as punishments. However, where a free born (*nwa-amadi*) is the culprit say in a case of incest, instead of being sold into slavery, he will be killed. For a free born (*nwa-amadi*) would not be subjected to the dehumanizing state of slavery. Rape attracts the penalty of the culprit being banished from the Aro community while a theft culprit is made to face social disgrace of being taken round the village half-naked with people mocking him or her. Similarly, other social vices attract lesser degree of punishments. It could be said that Arochukwu is the seat of civilization in 18th and 19th centuries in Igboland and beyond.

Political Background

Arochukwu runs a monarchical form of government which has lasted for about nine hundred years (900 years). The Aro confederacy constitutes of nineteen (19) villages which came under close-knit of three (3) kindred's, namely, Okennachi which produces the Eze-Aro, the Ibom Isii and the Eze Agwu. Dike and Bejiuba (cited by Onwumere, 2009, P. 5) asserts that;

Aro history should be seen as an experiment in polytechnic state formation, a precursor of the contemporary incorporation of many multi-ethnic groups into one political unit... the Aro welded diverse groups and individuals together into a people with a sense of common identity and commitment to being an Aro. All citizens of an Aro community are Umu-Aro regardless of the towns from where their ancestors migrated to Aro community and their reason for their migration.

Adding to this, Ike (2002, P. 11) notes that "It is a fact of history that the Arochukwu kingdom ranked among the major kingdoms which held sway within the territory which the British colonial powers subsequently amalgamated into present day Nigeria". Ijoma (2002, P. 47), indicates that "the Aro in order to have an undisturbed flow of traffic entered into covenants, *Igba-ndu*, with the leaders of the communities they passed through or settled in. These leaders ensured that the Aro troupes were not molested or robbed". Actually, Aro people are conscious of their status and the need to extend their political frontiers. This was brought to bear in choosing their neighboring towns by allowing only friendly and less offensive towns to immediately surround Arochukwu for the purpose of fishing and farming. In respect of this, Aro ancient kingdom has common boundary on the east with Itu villages now in South-west Calabar, on the northern boundary are Ututu and Ihechiowa while on the south are Obotime and Ikpe in Akwa-Ibom state. On the west is Onuas stream. According to Onwuchekwa (2002, P. 17), "These towns acted as buffer-zones, early warning systems of human shield or barricade". In spite of the above steps taken to protect the Aro political structure, a number of factors militated against it which made it possible for the British Aro expedition of 1901/02 to succeed. An event that opened up not only Arochukwu but the entire Igboland. Okeke (2006, P. 29), notes that "the Presbyterian church was also drawn into Igboland after the pacification exercise and the formal destruction of Ubini Ukpabi of Arochukwu".

Economic Background

The Aro people are predominantly traders and farmers. They produce food crops like cassava, yams, cocoyams, rice and so on. They also produce cash crops like cocoa, rubber, cashew, palm oil and so on. The presence of various streams and rivers in various locations at

Arochukwu made the production of fish and other sea foods possible in the land.

The high proficiency of the Aro people in trading activities in the different Aro settlements, boost the economic stance and power of the Aro kingdom. To cap it all is the presence of the Long Juju *Ibinukpabi* oracle and slave trade activities. This flourished so well within the period of 18th and 19th centuries. Okoro (2009, P. 14) indicates that the;

Aro popularized and sustained long distance trade, and in process established a regional trade system as they had in the Aro system. Aro long distance trade had brought communities and kingdoms of the Niger delta and Cross River together, stretching beyond. At the height of Aro power, their influence stretched from Atlantic Ocean in the south to the basins and banks of the Niger and Benue Rivers.

Uma (cited by Ijoma, 2002) corroborates this view that Aro trade was a well organized affair. The Aro charted trade routes throughout the length and breadth of what became southeastern Nigeria and established Aro colonies numbering close to a hundred by the end of 19th century. Ofoelue (2012, P. 3) buttresses this view stating that "The Arochukwu kingdom was an economical, political, and an oracular centre as it was home of the powerful *Ibinukpabi* oracle, High Priests; the Aro king Eze-Aro, and chiefs". But the above situation was destabilized with the coming of Christianity. Hence, Ayandele (1991, P.144-145) posits that "the missionary activity was disruptive force". Azubuike (2007), supports this by saying that indeed, the missionary was revolutionary because the Christian message does turn the people down. They become dysfunctional in the society.

The Advent and activities of the Early Mission Church in Arochukwu.

The Anglican Church (the Niger Delta Pastorate -N. D. P.)

Quite surprisingly, after the conquest of the Aro Kingdom, the first Christian mission to come to Arochukwu was not the Presbyterian church also known as the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C: S.), who championed the Arc expedition in 1992. The Niger Delta pastorate (N.D.P.) which is the branch of the church missionary society occupying

the Niger Delta area headed by Danderson Crowther with its headquarters at Bonny was the first to come to Arochukwu. The Niger Delta pastorate (N.D.P.) was established in Bonny in 1864 by Ajayi Crowther. From there The Niger Delta pastorate (N.D.P) moved to Okrika, Brass, Opobo and Calabar. It was from Opobo that they came to Arochukwu immediately after the Aro expedition. According to Kalu (1996, P. 56-57);

The Niger Delta pastorate sent a team to Bende and Arochukwu led by J. A. Praft and consisting of chief Alexander Hart, Hezekiah Peppie, Mathew Waribo. Strong Face and Jacob Epelle. They opened a mission in Bende on 11 February 1904 and at Amangwu (Arochukwu). However, when Bishop Johnson, Archdeacon Crowther and Rev. McCarthy of the NDP visited Calabar to negotiate for a chaplaincy so as to cater for their members doing business in the port, Presbyterians were quick to see the possibility of a trade off. They offered the Anglicans a chaplaincy in view of their little mission in Arochukwu which was in the "development path" of the Presbyterians. This is the genesis of Trinity church on Calabar.

Alexander Hart, a catechist from Bonny was the first Niger Delta pastorate missionary in Arochukwu. He had his base at the house of Ekpo Onyirisara of Obinkita village in Arochukwu, Achinivu (1978, P. 23-24) asserts that;

The first converts of the NDP in Arochukwu were Mazi Ekpo Onyirisara and his household. Alexander Hart preached to them in the parlour of Mazi Ekpo Onyirisara, when the news of the new religion and the presence of Alexander Hart spread in the town. The inquisitive villagers came to listen to him. He preached to them about almighty God and his son. Jesus Christ and promised to set up a school for them so that they could learn the ways of the white man. Initially, his preaching and promises fell on deaf ears. The chiefs and elders of Arochukwu threatened the new religion with contempt. But with lime, the number of NDP converts began to increase.

As the population of the church members started to increase, Alexander Hart succeeded with the help of the elders to use the Obinkita village square which is more spacious for the conduct of the church services and Sunday school. Later, Cockeye Brown, another catechist from Niger Delta pastorate succeeded Alexander Hart by 1903 the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.), the Presbyterian Church appeared again on the Aro scene. It is noteworthy to state here that the activity of the Niger Delta Pastorate (N. D. P.) was rudimentary when the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) came to Arochukwu. With the settlement of the dispute which erupted between the N. D. P. and United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) in 1904 and the Archbishop Tugwell's agreement, the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) became the predominant church in Arochukwu since the agreement of demarcation allowed her to operate in Arochukwu while the Niger Delta pastorate was assigned to other areas.

Notwithstanding the above agreement a few Niger Delta Pastorate (N. D. P.) converts went into the tick forest in Ututu, a nearby village and continued to worship there. After the civil war, the Aro people started to return home to Arochukwu and most of them since they are Niger Delta Pastorate (N. D. P.) or Anglicans started to go to Ututu every Sunday to worship there. Thus, there was ardent need to re-establish Anglican Church in Arochukwu. The colonial government partitioning and operational religion rights which truncated the earlier move of the Anglican Church under the auspices of the Niger Delta Pastorate (N. D. P.) in Arochukwu broke down, hence fresh appearance on the Arochukwu land in 1977. Today, Anglican Church is one of the leading churches (missions) in Arochukwu and has established a secondary school at Agbagwu Arochukwu, many churches and primary schools as well as other developmental projects.

The United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.)

The emergence of the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) in Arochukwu in 1903 gave rise to a dispute between the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) and the Niger Delta pastorate (N. D. P.) in 1904 over the right of operation in the area. Dede (2011, P. 4) asserts that "the boundary conference in September 1904 to delimit denominational districts and to prevent over lapping the Authorities of the Niger Delta pastorate church, accede to the transfer of Bende to Methodist Mission and Arochukwu to the Presbyterian mission. Thus, the withdrawal of the Niger pastorate left the United Free Church of

Scotland later known as Church of Scotland (the present day Presbyterian Church) actually in control of Arochukwu.

During the period of dispute between the Niger Delta pastorate and the United Free Church of Scotland, they later established the famous Mary Slessor School in 1903 at Amasu, an Aro Village on the Eniong Creek with one Asuquo, an Efik to run the school. Unfortunately, constant flood forced the United Free Church of Scotland authorities to close down the school in 1906. But the school is now sited in a better position in Arochukwu. With the United Free Church of Scotland now in control of Arochukwu mission fields, the elders of Aro who were taken captive during the expedition were released from Calabar. The first United Free Church of Scotland resident missionary for Arochukwu was John Rankin. He arrived Aro in 1906 with some Efik assistants from United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) mission at Duke Town in Calabar. He was charged with the responsibility of promoting the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) Mission in Arochukwu. On arrival, Rankin and his assistants were warmly welcomed by the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) converts in Arochukwu. Kalu (1996, P. 57) notes that "Rankin was backed by Slessor and Walkie whose voice carried much conviction".

When Rankin arrived, he saw that a church building was necessary for the congregation and with the help of Mazi Okoro Nkachu, they secured a piece of land known as *Ovia Ojoo*-bad bush. The elders believed that the evil spirits in the bad bush would kill the Christians. The bad bush was cleared and church built on the land and no harm happened to the Christians. Consequently, many traditionalists believed that the God of the Christians must be a very powerful God. Therefore, they joined the Christian fold. With this development, Okoro Nkachu-the chief of Amannagwu village (one of the nineteen villages in Arochukwu) relinquished his position to become a Christian. Achinivu (1976, PP. 27-28) stresses that;

The colonial government also played a vital role in promoting the cause of the UFCS and evangelization in Arochukwu by appointing leading converts like Mazi Nwafor Ogwuma as member of the native court of the colonial administration. These men used their position to victimize the traditional religionists; some of whom in attempt to escape victimization, became Christian converts.

The Missionary J. Rankin after building a church in Amannagwu village, secured a large piece of land in Obinkita village where he built a church, mission house and a school. With these structure now ready, he then transferred his headquarters from Amannagwu to Obinkita. He administered the sacrament of baptism in the church to a number of people on December, 19, 1909. John Rankin left Arochukwu in the mid 1920s after laying the foundation of the United Free Church of Scotland Church and was succeeded by McInclan who was later replaced by J. A. T. Beattie in 1928. Both Rankin and Beattie made good use of the services of the six men who were initially Niger Delta Pastorate (N. D. P.) converts. Some of the pioneer converts are as Okorafor Uroh of Amannagwu, Okoro Nkachu of Amannagwu, Oji Eni of Amannagwu, Ukwu Ekpo of Obinkita, Nwafor Ogwuma of Ibom (later a Rev.) and Okorafor Udo of Ugbo. In all, one of the most important achievements of J. A. T. Beattie in Arochukwu was the laying of foundation stone of the United Free Church of Scotland in 1934. The United Free Church of Scotland made effective use of education as a tool for evangelization. They established the Mary Slessor Memorial Home Female institution in Arochukwu in 1917, opened primary schools in Obinkita and Amannagwu villages. The Mary Slessor Memorial Home had a white missionary lady Agnes S. Arnot popularly known among the indigenes as *Ezinne* (good mother) as the first principal. In this school, the young girls were taught domestic studies, trained on how to get ready for marriage and home management; they were taught how to read the Bible and Christian tenets.

A.S. Arnot as well set up a sewing workshop for Aro widows where they had training in tailoring, embroidery, needle work and so on. She left Arochukwu in 1947. A. S. Arnot did not work alone. She had some female white missionaries that worked with her like Margret Graham who was the missionary health officer and Susana Mckennall that served as supervisor to the Twin home established at Amannagwu in 1927. The UFCS in the same vein established the Goldhle Theological College at Ibom village in 1926 for the training of local Missionaries with John Taylor Dean a white clergyman as the first principal. Many ministers of the Church had their training in this school, namely Paul Bassej Onwuchekwa, Joseph Madunta, A.O. Anicho, Kalu N. Ume, Oluaghu, J. Ikpeme to mention but few.

The Challenges Encountered by the Early Mission Churches in Arochukwu.

The evangelization of Arochukwu was not an all - round rosy affair for the early mission churches. As is normal, no culture or religion can surrender so easily to a new one without one form of resistance or the other. The Aro elders envisaged the coming of the long Juju (Ibinukpabi) and the lucrative slave trade activities. This made them to resist and in fact, paralyze the initial move of the United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S.) to evangelize Aro. According to Afigbo (1972, P. 8) "in a bid to solve the Aro problem, the United Free Church of Scotland had to appeal to the colonial government for assistance". Land acquisition was not all that easy as could be seen in the spirit and manner the land which is now the headquarters of the United Free Church of Scotland was acquired. The land given to them was bad bush (*ovia ojoo*), with the expectation that the Christians would die on cutting the bad bush - an expectation that did not come true.

The people accepted Christianity minus interference to their *Ibinukpabi*, polygamy, *Iru - Mgbede* and other related traditions. In addition, the Aro elders resistance to early mission churches was informed by the fact that they do not want their pride as priest of the highly recognized long Juju (*Ibinukpabi*) oracle to be jeopardized by the presence of the incoming religion. They refused half- measures or double - standard living unlike the case of Abiriba folk where some accepted the Christian faith and yet maintained their old practices like slave dealing. Kalu (1996, P. 231) states that "an attempt to discipline them as Christians, aroused the ire of a multitude of hidden slave dealers".

Contributions of the Early Mission Churches to the Development of Arochukwu

Christianity which the early mission churches brought came with what could be called the three C's method, that is, colonization or conquest, commerce and Christianity. In order words, it came with a holistic vision and mission which affects the mind, soul and body — the complete man. The following are the achievements of the early mission churches in the development of Arochukwu.

1. Colonization/civilization

The early mission churches were seen as the forebears of the Europeans (the colonial masters), and catalyst in the transformation of Arochukwu, nay the entire black from primitive to a civilized culture, and had

influenced all aspects of our life, society and existence. Rodney (2009, P. 256) asserts that;

The true situation was - African workers and peasants produced for European capitalism goods and services of a certain value. A small proportion were retained by them in the form of wages, cash payments and extremely unnoted social services - the rest went to the various beneficiaries of the colonial system.

Commenting further Ajayi (1969, P.163) concurs with this view that;

The civilization was essentially a civilization around the mission house. That is to say that the immediate beneficiaries, besides European traders were those in close contact with the missionaries, the converts and their friends and relatives to some extent, the emigrants above all.

2. **Evangelization**

The early mission churches through the power of the gospel evangelized the land of Arochukwu. There by making most of the people to do away with the indigenous religion and replaced it with Christianity. In essence, they Christianized them. However, Ayandele (1991, P. 242) observes that the missionaries could not bring the "pure milk of the Gospel". This was as a result of some of the lapses seen in the lives of some of missionaries like getting drunk, being involved in slavery and slave trade and so on. Nevertheless, the evangelistic mission of the early mission churches made a great impact in the Aro kingdom and black race.

3. **Education**

The early mission churches used education as the most powerful means of conversion and enlightenment. The United Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian church) established the Mary Slessor Memorial Home in 1917, for girls, a sewing workshop (institute) for training of Aro widows, primary schools in Obinkita and Amannagwu and used it as well as the High Goldie Theological College in Ibom which came into existence in November, 1925. Iwuoha (2002, P.100) notes that "Christianity and formal education system were each so strong that they quickly ousted the existing ideas, namely the religious beliefs and practices, and African informal educational system".

4. **Abolition of Bad Customs and Traditions**

The early mission churches (Christianity) abolished some of the bad customs and ideas and way of life like ritual, murder, killing of twins and ostracizing their mothers. It took the added effort of other missionaries like Mary Slessor and Agnes S. Arnot in the extreme southeast of Igbo land at Arochukwu and the influenced British colonial masters to end this practice of twin killing. Commenting on this Babalola (1988, P. 119-120) asserts that "Mary Slessor did everything possible to save the life of the victims of this custom and in most cases by taking them into her own custody and bringing up the infants".

5. **Healthcare**

Christianity brought improved health care and introduced same by opening a dispensary unit at the Mary Slessor Memorial Home where minor cases are treated and serious ones referred to the United Free Church of Scotland (U.F.C.S) Missionary hospital at Itu. Occasionally, arrangements were made for United Free Church of Scotland (U. F. C. S) doctors to come to Arochukwu to treat the patients. In this manner, ailment that hitherto defied cure by herbalists and explained away as curse or incurable were now curable.

6. **Economic Impact**

The early mission churches policy of "the Bible and the plough" helped in the development of Agriculture by making available better species of crops to our farmers for planting. This brought about the improvement in the economy of the people and de - emphasized slave trading. Onoh (2010, P.1) notes that;

the British government helped in this regard by planting an Orchard at barracks, full of rubber, cocoa, cocoyam, yam, palm tree, plantain, banana, cassava which was after 1916 and many fruit trees, Ukwukwa, mango, orange, paw - paw, pineapple, coconut and others.

7. **Social Impact**

The early mission churches brought an improvement in the code of conduct, improved social values for human life, and inculcated high ideals of western civilization and way of life. They introduced a binding rope that brought the Aro people under bond of unity as brothers in with others irrespective of class or status. What more? They stopped dehumanizing practices like trial by ordeal, slave trading and slavery.

8. **Employment Service**

The sowing workshop (institute) established by Agnes S. Arnot offered skilled acquisition training as well as employment opportunity to widows. They provided employment to the various workers (both lay and ordained). In the same vein, the various agricultural plantations developed by the British Government created job opportunities for the people. Looking at the employment and scheme offered, Ayandele (1991) indicates that the salary scale was very low and meagre. As for instance an intelligent clerk in the civil service can earn up to £300 per annum as against £100 mission scale as maximum pay.

9. **Humanitarian Services**

Christianity made a great achievement in this regard. The United Free Church of Scotland built a home for twins in Amannagwu (one of the nineteen (19) villages in Arochukwu) thereby preventing the killing of twins. In this way, the mission stopped the tradition of killing twins and ostracizing the mothers from the Society.

10. **Women Liberation**

Christianity through the services of some faithful women missionaries like Mary Slessor and Agnes.S. Arnot did not stop at eradicating the killing of twins and ostracizing their mothers, but also led the campaign for women liberation.

11. **Abolition of Obnoxious Superstitious Beliefs**

The early mission churches abolished most of the obnoxious superstitious beliefs and practices in Arochukwu like "Ohu system (slavery), trial by ordeal, oath taking at shrines, Uzi practice and so on. However, a school of thought holds the view that a lot still needs to be done because its *Ohu* system still persist among the Arochukwu people. For instance, poor parents still hand their children over to wealthy people for servitude. At times, an agreed sum is being paid to such parents. The freedom, liberty and so on of such child is thereby mortgaged. This is modern day slavery or child abuse. Abonyi (cited by Anujiri, 2009, P.44-45) states that "child abuse and neglect include tampering with the rights of the child, child labour and child slavery, forced labour, economic exploitation and street hawking rejection, denial and deprivation, withdrawal of love and so on. Nmah (2008, P. 84) asserts also that child labour is "a replacement of old pattern of slavery. It is a modern way of slavery targeted at exploitation".

Conclusion

The evangelization of Arochukwu involved many missionaries both whites and blacks, whose tireless activities spanned through decades. The missionaries through their churches and educational institutions had greatly changed the people's way of life and eradicated a number of evils like killing of twins and ostracizing their mothers from the society, slavery, slave trade and obnoxious superstitious beliefs. Today, most of the people are practicing Christians with only a small minority still practicing the traditional religion. From the foregoing, we can see that the contributions of the early mission churches to the development of Arochukwu are quite enormous. Although, the very few traditionalists may be lamenting over the exploits of Christianity as in the words of Achebe (1985, P.124-125) that;

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us a we have fallen apart.

Besides, the low spirituality of a good number of present day Christians as well as less commitment on the part of today's gospel bearers poses a big threat to the course of Christianity. Consequently, the contemporary Aro Christians and ministers alike should consolidate on the works for which the gallant forebears toiled and should pursue with great vigor the injunction of the great commission "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 6:15). All in all, it is an axiomatic fact that the early mission churches did quite a lot for us and the achievements cut across every sphere of our existence (not only for Aro but the entire black race). The contemporary Christians and ministers could advance the course of the gospel the more by making use of the good aspects of our culture.

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